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ABSTRACT

Inadequate support is presently offered for the study of certain important questions which have serious implications for educational policies affecting women. Priority should be given to the support of those areas of research and program development and evaluation that have the most critical implications for both the higher education of women and women's status in institutions of higher education. Support should include: (1) research on coeducational and sex education experiences, outcomes of affirmative action, career patterns of women, living arrangements, intellectual development, women's psychological autonomy, social policies regarding families; (2) development and evaluation of women's studies, women's centers, counseling services, efforts to encourage women to enter other than traditional majors and/or career fields, "coping training," sex distributions, the means to raise the level of women's qualitative skills, classroom sex ratios; recruitment of women to the field of educational evaluation, statistics as a more integral part of women's education, efforts to attract women faculty; and (3) strategies to improve program development, information storage, and to encourage new hypotheses pertinent to woman's education and development. (Author/KE)

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project on the status and education of **women**

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RESEARCH AND SUPPORT STRATEGIES FOR WOMEN'S HIGHER EDUCATION

*The following statement was prepared by the members of the Advisory Committee for the Project on the Status and Education of Women, Association of American Colleges. The Committee consists of: Samuel F. Babbitt, Kirkland College; Lois B. Moreland, Spelman College; Joel Read, Alverno College; Geraldine Rickman, Geraldine Rickman Associates, Inc.; Adele Simmons, Princeton University; Sheila Tobias, Wesleyan University; Ann Truax, University of Minnesota; Robert J. Kerr, Mills College; and Esther Westervelt, Associated Colleges of the Mid-Hudson Area.**

We are members of a group concerned with the status and education of all women, white and minority, in higher education, whether they are students, faculty or administrators. It is our opinion that inadequate support is presently offered for the study of certain important questions which have serious implications for educational policies affecting women. It is especially significant to address these issues in 1975 -- International Women's Year.

The re-emergence of the women's movement in the mid-1960's has affected women's higher education in a number of ways. It has generated legislation and federal regulations regarding affirmative action and equal opportunity in order to increase women's opportunities as students and as employees in higher education. Very probably and perhaps paradoxically, it has been one factor leading to both the spread of co-education and the reaffirmation of support for single sex education for women. It doubtless helps to account for the recent rise in women's participation in higher education at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The women's movement has drawn attention to inequities in the employment status of women in higher education and stimulated women's pursuit of appointments and promotions as faculty members and administrators. To some extent at least, it has changed the expectations and aspirations that both white and minority women associate with higher education. It has also unquestionably increased public consciousness of the educational needs and potential for achievement of women of all groups.

The women's movement in academe also has had a conspicuous impact upon program development and research. Some faculty and administrators have developed courses and programs in women's studies which have not only proliferated rapidly, but have also grown steadily in scope and sophistication. Others have engaged in efforts to improve the counseling available to women and to develop vehicles for the provision of greater faculty and peer support. Attention to programs of continuing education for adult women, which began prior to the re-emergence of the women's movement, has markedly increased in recent years. Feminist scholars in a variety of disciplines have reexamined and rejected a number of cherished theories which had long provided the bases for analysis and interpretation of female characteristics and behaviors. A wide range of questions concerning the nature and origins of sex differences has been raised and these issues are being explored in such disciplines as biology, psychology, sociology, anthropology and history. Pressure on data collecting agencies, particularly federal agencies, has led to the development of statistics concerning education and employment which reveal a number of new details of sex differences in participation.

Out of this surge of interest and activity there should emerge, in time, some answers to many questions that are troubling those of us who are concerned with the utility and effectiveness of women's higher education, as well as with its equitable availability. We believe, however, that highest priority should be given to the support of those areas of research and program development and evaluation that have the most critical implications for both the higher education of women and women's status in institutions of higher education. We regard those discussed below as most salient.

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* The names of institutions are included for purposes of identification only.

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INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

EFFECTS OF CERTAIN STRUCTURES AND PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The possibilities for evaluation and comparison of the effects on women of certain long-existing structures and practices in higher education are legion. In some there is a pressing need for study since decisions are currently being made on the basis of ad hoc assumptions or out-dated experience. These are:

- Effects of coeducation and single sex educational experiences. The possible differing effects on women's educational experiences of the women's college (as compared to the coeducational institution) is one area that needs to be examined. Individual variables that need to be taken into account in such a study include the opportunities for leadership roles, choices of major fields, quality of academic achievement, level of career aspiration, interpersonal relationships (including heterosexual relationships and adjustments), and marital and family arrangements and satisfactions. Institutional variables that need to be taken into account include size, type, selectivity, and academic traditions. Ideally, such a study would attempt to cover a representative cross-section of institutions.

- Analysis of data on the outcomes of affirmative action. These data need to be collected and disseminated in order to assess changes in the representation of women and minorities in the administration and on the faculties of all our institutions of higher education, by department and/or field, through systematic reporting by institutions. The possibility of outside support for collecting the necessary institutional data should be explored.

- Analysis of career patterns of women. An examination is needed of differences in the extent to which different institutions produce women graduates who enter other than the traditional career fields. In addition, efforts need to be made to identify factors associated with these differences.

- Effects of dormitory options and living arrangements. Further examination is needed of the relative desirability of providing or not providing options, for both male and female students, on coeducational campuses regarding dormitory and other living arrangements (i.e., single sex versus coeducational dormitories, and various living arrangements within coeducational dorms).

DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS

As noted earlier, a number of new programs for women have been initiated in colleges and universities. However, in most instances these programs have not been systematically evaluated. For example, the effectiveness of the following needs to be evaluated:

- Courses and programs in women's studies. The objectives of these activities vary considerably -- from affecting behavioral and attitudinal changes in the women and men enrolled, to stimulating new theoretical conceptualizations and directions for research. In order to evaluate courses and programs in light of their objectives, it is necessary to undertake research both (1) to evaluate and measure behavioral and attitudinal changes and (2) to measure the quality and quantity of completed work by students and the impact of this work on related ongoing research.

- Women's centers. These centers generally are designed to provide peer support, aid in conflict resolution, furnish counseling for career and life planning, and provide related services. Evaluation is needed to measure the differential impact of centers on different groups of women (e.g., white and minority women, freshmen and upperclassmen, etc.), their effects on male behavior and attitudes, and the socio-psychological dynamics associated with the development and growth or disintegration of these centers.

- Counseling services designed specifically for women. Evaluation would compare the effectiveness of, and differences in, the types and content of counseling available to women through these services and through established college counseling services.

- Constellations of efforts (including activities, courses and services) to raise the awareness of men students regarding women's needs and concerns. Evaluation is needed to explore the effectiveness of these efforts and to identify behavioral and attitudinal differences between male students exposed to such efforts and those not so exposed.

- Programs of continuing education for women. Evaluation would compare the effects on older women (i.e., outcomes of education) of participation in programs aimed at "traditional" younger students, to those designed particularly to serve mature women, including those with a specific focus (e.g., upgrading the occupational level of minority women, graduate professional programs designed for the part-time mature woman student, etc.). Evaluation might also examine any differences in characteristics of women enrolling in various types of programs.

- Programs, courses, and related efforts to encourage women to enter other than traditional majors and/or career fields (e.g., management in business and industry, engineering, etc.). Evaluation would attempt to measure outcomes not merely by a follow-up of graduates, but also by comparing career choices of women graduates from various types of institutions.

There are also programs in early or planning stages that should be supported, with provision for evaluation included in the funding. These include:

- Programs designed to offer women "coping training." For example, programs are needed to assist women to become more assertive in personal style and expectations. Evaluation should include comparision of the effects of different types of learning experiences (e.g., learning outside the classroom, use of laboratory techniques such as group process, exposure to role models, films, drama, etc.), as well as measurement of learning retention and differences in retention by type of learning experience.

- Experiments with differing sex distributions and with sex segregation in the classroom and in experiential learning settings, including experiments that attempt to measure the influence of the sex of teacher or supervisor on women's attitudes and behavior. Evaluation would examine the extent to which changes in attitudes and behaviors identified in the course of such experiments persisted in the women participants in other settings and over time.

- Efforts through programs, workshops, and other means to raise the level of women's quantitative skills and increase their confidence in their ability to use these skills in managerial roles. These efforts would be designed for women already employed in higher education for the purpose of facilitating their rise to higher administrative levels. Evaluation would attempt to measure the extent to which these efforts raised the participants' level of competency and interest in the exercise of quantitative skills and the extent to which such a rise facilitated career development.

- Experiments to determine the effect of various classroom sex ratios in encouraging women to enter fields that have not traditionally attracted women (e.g., physics). Evaluation would attempt to measure the effect of classroom sex ratios on women's subsequent academic performance in the subject and on their choices of majors and careers.

Most proposals for experimental projects in educational contain pious commitments to EVALUATION OF OUTCOMES. As a rule, however, only the largest and most generously funded projects actually engage in sophisticated and extensive evaluation efforts. In part this is caused by funding that does not cover the costs of competent evaluation. In addition this is partly a function of the difficulties inherent in evaluating educational outcomes since any measure of the persistence of effect requires longitudinal study. Also, it is partly a result of the shortage of individuals trained in educational evaluation. This shortage is particularly unfortunate when attempts are made to evaluate experiments in women's higher education, because such ventures are typically underfunded (and very frequently have no outside funding) and understaffed. Furthermore, these experimental programs are often developed by women faculty and administrators from academic fields which do not generally require the use of the quantitative skills upon which evaluation techniques depend. These women often do not have access to whatever evaluative capabilities their institutions may possess because these experiments in women's education are typically regarded as peripheral to the central functions of the institutions and are thus not entitled to any significant contribution of institutional funds and expertise. We therefore urge the following:

- Active efforts should be undertaken to recruit women to the field of educational evaluation, both through attempts to interest undergraduate and graduate women students in the field, and attempts to attract to evaluation women faculty from fields which require some competency in quantitative operations (e.g., psychology, sociology, economics, social psychology, mathematics, etc.)

- Courses and programs designed to make statistics a more integral part of women's education should be a concomitant of efforts to recruit undergraduate and graduate women students into evaluation. Also, a much greater emphasis on methodologies of evaluation is needed in undergraduate and graduate programs in the field of education, since this is a field frequently chosen by women.

- Efforts should be made to attract women faculty from appropriate academic fields to training in methodologies of evaluation by workshops of sufficient length and/or frequency to insure thorough coverage of all major evaluation methodologies. These workshops should be located at institutions with resources adequate for such training, conducted by recognized authorities in the various techniques of educational evaluation, and limited to participants with a demonstrated interest and intent to engage in educational evaluation. While men obviously could not be excluded from such training programs, there should be strong emphasis on the recruitment of women. We would hope that funding would provide faculty, staff and stipends for participants.

RESEARCH ON INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT

To the extent that decisions regarding the qualifications of women are still being made on the basis of certain questionable assumptions about female psychological development and various differences and similarities between males and females (especially with regard to factors associated with family status and age), there is a pressing need for further research to include the following:

- Research on patterns of intellective development during the middle years of adulthood (25 to 65) that will build on existing data for earlier years in order to identify relationships between various social variables and differing patterns of development. One aspect of such research should be the study of sex differences in chronological patterns of intellectual productivity (with thoughtful attention to the definition of "productivity"). Such studies may provide a clearer perception of whether, taking into account differences in chronological patterns among academic and other fields, women tend to reach a peak of productivity later in life than do men (as a few early studies have suggested). Such research has important implications for women's employment opportunities, especially in higher education, since many women enter, or attempt to enter, full-time employment in academe and elsewhere at a later age than do men.

- Research on effects on women's psychological autonomy and independence of socialization experiences associated with traditional adult roles as wife, mother, housekeeper, suburban resident, and financial dependent, with controls for social class and race differences. Such research would be aimed toward obtaining a more precise measure of the relative strengths of the impact on autonomy and independence of an androgynous education coupled with experience of academic achievement and the cultural demands of certain traditional feminine roles. One approach to research in this area could be a study of differences in levels of autonomy and independence in women living in non-traditional family arrangements or in dual career families and in those living in traditional family arrangements. Another interesting possibility for study in this area is a follow-up of the subjects of the Mellon Foundation research carried on at Vassar during the 1950's; in view of the large amounts of data collected on these subjects during their college years, such a study could be extremely productive.

- Research related to social policies regarding families. Heated debates regarding child care policies, urban and suburban planning, welfare programs, educational programs and facilities and related issues indicate the urgency of the need. The necessary research encompasses many areas of interest and lies within many disciplines. This circumstance suggests that a center for such studies should be established with support from both public and private funding agencies and with a guarantee of support for at least a five year period.

STRATEGIES FOR THE ENCOURAGEMENT AND COORDINATION OF EXPERIMENTATION AND RESEARCH AND THE DISSEMINATION OF FINDINGS

The tendency of institutions and individuals to "go it alone" in developing and seeking support for proposals, while tending to insure the relatively steady input of original ideas for programs and research, costs funding agencies both time and money and can be detrimental to the quality, scope, and ultimate usefulness of projects and studies whose implications for practice are potentially far-reaching. We recommend the following measures as approaches to achieving economy, coordination, and utility without discouraging originality:

- Conferences on program development and research pertinent to women's higher education (possibly regional, rather than national, to stimulate fuller participation), designed to encourage the sharing of ideas and planning for cooperation and coordination among those who develop experimental programs and those who are qualified to conduct relevant research.

- More efficient means of information storage and retrieval for materials on program development and research pertinent to women's higher education. One alternative is the establishment of a facility exclusively for this purpose; another is an organized effort to increase the usefulness for this purpose of several existing systems by adding new categories for storage and retrieval and attracting new sources of input.

- Encouragement of the exploration of new conceptual schemes and theoretical formulations capable of generating new hypotheses pertinent to women's education and development through funding a year devoted to such an undertaking at some existing center ("think tank"). Invited to participate would be scholars from various disciplines and practitioners from various fields who have demonstrated concern with these problems and some competence to work with them.

September 1975

THE PROJECT ON THE STATUS AND EDUCATION OF WOMEN of the Association of American Colleges began operations in September of 1971. The Project provides a clearinghouse of information concerning women in education and works with institutions, government agencies, and other associations and programs affecting women in higher education. The Project is funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Danforth Foundation, and the Exxon Education Foundation. Publication of these materials does not necessarily constitute endorsement by AAC or any of the foundations which fund the Project.

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